



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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Big Stone Gap woman receives Governor's Caregiver Recognition Award *Love and dedication keep her caring for others*

Richmond, VA — Loretta Stapleton of Big Stone Gap understands the affects of Alzheimer's Disease. She has watched the disease take its toll on her mother and has helped her battle the disease since 1995. She now voluntarily provides round-the-clock care for her mother, ensuring her needs are met.

Stapleton is one of only nine people throughout the Commonwealth to receive the Governor's Volunteer Caregiver Recognition Award. The annual awards program, in its second year, is sponsored by the Virginia Council on the Status of Women. Stapleton and the other eight recipients were honored on Feb. 21. Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) Commissioner Anthony Conyers, Jr., members of the Virginia General Assembly and representatives from the Virginia Council on the Status of Women attended the ceremony to honor this year's recipients and the more than one million unpaid caregivers within Virginia.

"The Caregiver Award symbolically honors the thousands of Virginia caregivers who lovingly take care of family and friends day-after-day. Although the award is only given to a few caregivers, it serves as a reminder of the tremendous contributions all caregivers within the Commonwealth make," Conyers said.

Stapleton also serves as an advocate and educator. She is a member of the Mountain Empire Older Citizens Big Stone Gap Alzheimer's Support Group and offers information, advice and resources to other caregivers and family members of Alzheimer's patients. Her dedication to caring for her family does not end with her mother. She also provides care for her adult son, who has health issues, as well.

Loretta Stapleton's care of her family is part of a growing trend across the country and the Commonwealth. Virginia ranks 12th in the nation in the number of family caregivers, with a total of nearly 700,000 people caring for relatives.

In addition to Stapleton, this year's recipients included:

- Jean Beckett of Virginia Beach, who has been a caregiver since 1980, assisting her mother, father, grandmother and adult stepdaughter
- Carolyn Seward of Richmond, who put her career aside to aid seven young family members, including two who have developmental disabilities
- Valerie Logan of Richmond, who for 17 years, has been the sole caregiver of her daughter, who was born prematurely at just 29 weeks, weighing only two pounds
- Barbara Matheny of Hopewell, who, despite her own health problems, cares for her ill daughter and four young grandchildren
- Henry Tyson of Hampton, who, at nearly 90, has provided full-time care for his ailing wife for the last seven years, allowing her to stay at home, as opposed to a nursing home
- Karen Cockrell of Front Royal, who has provided care for dozens of abused, neglected, abandoned and runaway children, as well as those in transition from foster homes or whose family situation does not allow for care by a relative
- Irene Imbrongo of Lynchburg, who provides constant care for her husband in his battle with progressive Alzheimer's Disease
- John Blanks of Richmond, who has become the primary caregiver for his mother and grandmother since his father passed away

Nationally, it is estimated there are more than 44 million volunteer caregivers. The need for such individuals is expected to increase throughout the next 25 years as the population grows and ages. The Governor's Volunteer Caregiver Award recognizes and honors those who lovingly and voluntarily provide care for family and friends and is intended to publicly celebrate their contributions, as well as bring awareness to the issue of volunteer caregiving.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.dss.virginia.gov>

http://www.dss.virginia.gov/community/council_women/caregiver.html

http://www.dss.virginia.gov/news/2007/pr_caregivers_03-01-2007.pdf

<http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/as/caregiver.html>

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Editor's note: Interviews and additional photos available upon request.